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ABSTRACT

This paper examines leadership in higher education, specifically in community colleges. The first section reviews current definitions and theories of education, including transactional leadership (where there is an exchange between the leader and the follower) and transformational leadership (where the leader tries to change the framework itself by appealing to the needs of followers) philosophies. The second section discusses four cultures in higher education: (1) collegial, a culture that finds meaning primarily in the disciplines represented by the faculty; (2) managerial, a culture that finds meaning in the organization, implementation, and evaluation of work directed toward specified goals and purposes; (3) developmental, a culture that finds purpose in the creation of programs and activities that further the growth of all members of the collegiate community; and (4) negotiating, a culture that finds meaning in the establishment of egalitarian policies for the distribution of institutional resources. Finally, the third section of the paper focuses on issues of leadership in higher education, particularly the role of transformational leadership in the paradigm shift from a teaching culture to a learning culture. Contains 19 references. (SJL)

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LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

> For scientific leadership give me Scott; for swift and efficient travel, Amundsen; but when you are in a hopeless situation, when there seems no way out, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton. (Lansing, 1959, p. 14)

In 1914, Sir Ernest Shackleton set sail from England for the south Atlantic with the goal of crossing the Antarctic overland. Over a year later, Shackleton and his crew found themselves trapped in ice that would eventually crush and sink their ship, the *Endurance*. For five months, Shackleton and 27 crewmen drifted on ice packs before setting out on a 1,000 mile voyage in an open boat, followed by an overland trek through glaciers and mountains. Incredibly, all 28 men survived and credited their survival to Shackleton's leadership.

Mercifully, few of us will be in situations that require the kind of leadership – and followership – that Shackleton and his crew demonstrated. However, we are daily confronted with hundreds of decisions, large and small, that require someone to make a decision, to take the lead. Instead of a crew on a ship in the Antarctic, the circumstances are usually far less dramatic: settling a family disagreement, selecting a new employee, choosing a textbook. Though certainly less critical than the life-and-death circumstances facing the crew of the *Endurance*, these decisions may nevertheless be quite complex and have farther reaching effects than are first apparent. In addition to decisions that *must* be made, there are those that *should* be made in order to move an organization (or an individual) to a higher level of performance and quality. To effect the transformation of an organization requires leadership, but leadership that is appropriate to the culture of the organization. The purpose of this paper is to examine leadership in the context of higher education, with emphasis on community colleges. The first section will briefly review current definitions and theories of leadership. The second section will discuss the culture

of higher education and the third section will focus on issues of leadership within higher education.

DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP

Bass asserts that the search for a single, true definition of leadership is fruitless and indeed there are numerous possibilities. For example, leadership can be defined as:

> . . . an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectation of the members. Leaders are agents of change – persons whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. (Bass, 1990, pp. 19-20)

> . . . leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – *of both leaders and followers. . . . Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers.* (Burns, 1978, pp. 18-19)

> . . . the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers. (Gardner, 1990, p. 1)

> . . . liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible. . . .The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor. That sums up the progress of an artful leader. (DePree, 1989, pp. xx, 11)

- Leaders influence people to follow a course of action through persuasion or example.
- As a leader, you form constructive relationships and partnerships with people.

- Effective leaders inspire, persuade, influence, and motivate others and spearhead useful changes.
- Leaders transform mediocre organizations into excellent organizations.(DuBrin, 1998, p. 12)

What these various definitions have in common is the notion that leadership empowers, motivates and changes. They are definitions that stem from current theories of leadership that emphasize interaction and transformation. As Bass (1990) notes, leadership can be roughly divided into two types: the autocratic and the democratic. The autocratic type correlates with a directive leadership style and the democratic type with a participative style. A second major distinction is that which can be made between transactional and transformational leadership. Bass observes that this distinction is very important to any discussion of leadership. In *transactional* leadership, there is an exchange (or transaction) between the leader and the follower, e.g., jobs for votes, positive reinforcement for good work, or merit pay for increased performance. It is "leadership as bartering" (Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989, p. 215). The exchange takes place within the established framework of the organization or system. Although transactional theories dominated leadership studies in the 1960s, Sergiovanni observes that "many experts believe that transactional leadership has run its course [because] it is based on a limited view of human potential, an inadequate view of how the world works, and an outdated conception of the field of management theory and practice" (Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989, p. 215).

In *transformational* leadership, the leader aims to change the framework itself and does so by appealing to the higher level needs and the intrinsic motivation of followers. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing to the present, leadership studies have emphasized transformational

leadership over transactional leadership, although transactional leadership can be effective at certain levels and for certain tasks.

The important point about transformational leadership is that it effectively converts followers into leaders by asking them to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the organization. It is "leadership as building and bonding" (Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989, p. 215). Bass notes that this type of leadership – a combination of charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration – is "closer to the prototype of leadership that people have in mind when they describe their ideal leader" (Bass, 1990, p. 54). Ultimately, transformational leadership becomes moral leadership "in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the follower, thus transforming both (Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989, p. 215).

Current leadership theories and definitions emphasize leadership as both cause and result of the interaction between leaders and followers. They emphasize a dynamic relationship among multiple factors. Leadership "must be conceived in terms of the interaction of variables that are in constant flux" (Bass, 1990, p. 76). This does not mean that leadership is haphazard, but it does mean that a person who is a leader in one situation may not be a leader in another and that care must be taken to match people with situations and tasks. Current thinking about leadership de-emphasizes theories which explain leadership on the basis of personality traits and ignore the effect of situations. "The trait approach is not enough for understanding leadership. Above and beyond personal attributes of consequence, the situation can make a difference" (Bass, 1990, p. 563).

According to current theory, it is important to consider the culture in which leadership both emerges and is applied. "It is clear that the external environment and the complex organization

exert important effects on the leader's behavior in his or her group" (Bass, 1990, p. 565). In fact, the more varied the external environment, the more varied the organization needs to be. Consequently leaders in such environments must demonstrate more varied behavior (Bass, 1990, p. 566). Within the organization, leadership is determined by the organization's principles, culture, and social structure (Bass, 1990, p. 571). Therefore, it is important to examine both the internal and external environments of academe to better understand what is required of its leaders.

ACADEMIC CULTURE

Academic culture is different from corporate culture in significant ways. It is even unique from one segment of the academic world to another. The cultures of elementary and secondary schools are distinct from those in community colleges, which in turn are distinct from the cultures of four-year institutions. Further, public institutions have very different cultures than private ones. The major distinction, however, is between the corporate and academic world, for much of the current thinking about leadership and management is based on corporate experience and is not always directly applicable to higher education.

> Universities contrast greatly with mainline utilitarian organizations and have been described as organized anarchies...universities are likely to have problematic goals, unclear technologies, and fluid participation in decision making. Inertia is high in universities. Most issues are of little consequence to the members as a whole, and decisions depend on who happens to be involved at the time they have to be made. There is a weak base of information available. Effective leadership requires managing unobtrusively, providing arenas for discussing a wide variety of problems, facilitating the participation of opposing points of view, and persisting in attempts to accomplish objectives despite the inertia. (Bass, 1990, p. 577)

Sergiovanni proposes that factors of size and purpose make corporate concepts of organizational culture inapplicable to schools which are much more analogous to families than they are to corporations (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 47).

In The Four Cultures of the Academy, Bergquist (1992) examines various definitions of culture, concluding that all share three common characteristics:

1. They suggest that culture provides meaning and context for a specific group of people.
2. They suggest that a culture helps to define the nature of reality for those people who are part of that culture
3. The culture does not exist for itself. Rather, it exists to provide a context (Bergquist, 1992, pp. 2-3).

Bergquist then identifies four distinct but interrelated cultures in American higher education, noting that each has its own history, perspective and values. Two of them, the collegial and managerial cultures, can be traced back to the origins of American higher education. The other two, developmental and negotiating, are more recent developments. It is worth examining Bergquist's categories because they contribute much to an understanding of the nature of leadership in higher education.

The collegial culture is a culture that finds meaning primarily in the disciplines represented by the faculty in the institutions. Among its attributes is the fact that the collegial culture values the quasi-political governance processes of the faculty and sees the mission of the institution as the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge and values. It holds untested assumptions about the dominance of rationality in the institution.

In Bergquist's model, each culture requires a different kind of leadership. For example, the collegial culture is a "loosely coupled" structure, to use Birnbaum's term (Birnbaum, 1988).

That does not mean that leaders have less influence; rather, it means that they must exert that influence differently. In this case, "loosely coupled" refers to the *managerial* aspects. The *cultural* connectedness is extremely tight. Leaders in predominantly collegial cultures must work within an informal, non-hierarchical and long-term environment. Authority is widely diffused throughout the institution, so leaders lead by influence, often behind the scenes. Faculty perceive that decision making resides in faculty controlled, committee-based governance structures and believe that leaders should emerge from faculty ranks. Compared to other organizations, higher education has much higher involvement of its professional staff in decision making. For these reasons, it is not easy for those from a corporate environment or even another public service to understand and work within the collegial culture.

The collegial culture tends to select leaders on the basis of personality traits such as charisma, character, wisdom, and vision, all of which are difficult to define. The collegial culture also values political savvy because it "assumes that effective leadership is exerted through the complex give-and-take of campus politics" (Bergquist, 1992, p. 44). To become a leader in such an environment generally takes a long time as faculty members move up the ranks. Thus, most leaders in this culture are older and more experienced; younger, less experienced and typically more diverse faculty have a more difficult time accessing leadership positions.

Bergquist maintains that while all four cultures exist in any given college or university, one tends to be the dominant culture. Further, Bergquist asserts that each culture has an opposite with which it both interacts and upon which it depends. For example, the developmental culture emerged in response to problems associated with the collegial culture. Nevertheless, it depends upon the collegial culture to give it definition. Any attempts at change, at doing something new, must take into account all four cultures, each of which requires different strategies for

implementing change. Realistically, change agents within a university must have a repertoire of strategies.

The managerial[1] culture is a culture that finds meaning primarily in the organization, implementation, and evaluation of work that is directed toward specified goals and purposes. The managerial culture agrees with the collegial culture in terms of the institution's mission. However, it places higher value on fiscal responsibility, supervision, and quantitative measures of outcomes. This culture holds untested assumptions about the capacity of the institution to define and measure its goals and objectives clearly.

The managerial culture assumes clear lines of authority and systematic planning and managerial processes. According to Bergquist, it originated in two distinctly American collegiate institutions: the Catholic college and the community college. In the case of the community college, the link to the managerial culture is based on the fact that the community college grew out of the secondary school systems and has been managed in much the same way. The managerial culture values successful fiscal and personnel management as well as the establishment and measurement of institutional outcomes.

As noted above, the managerial culture, like the collegial culture, most values student learning, especially learning which can be assessed quantitatively. "The key word in the managerial culture's concept of leadership, just as in its notion of effective education, seems to be *competence*" (Bergquist, 1992, p 77). Competence is usually defined in traditional corporate terms, e.g., maintaining the physical plant, managing external relations, and coordinating student

[1] According to Atwell, higher education literature makes much more of a distinction between management and leadership than the corporate literature. In higher education, *leadership* implies vision and goal setting in response to followers' needs. *Management* is the more mundane implementation of those goals. Some theorists maintain that the distinction is a false one and that the terms are synonymous. In this case , Bergquist's use of *managerial* is generic and not in opposition to the concept of leadership.

affairs, and as Bergquist notes, most faculty would not argue that these are appropriate managerial tasks. They would, however, object strongly to the suggestion that managers should somehow "manage" curriculum, research, the teaching and learning process, or academic personnel. Leaders in a managerial culture need to be skillful about managing people as well as money. They understand that what is desired and valued in this type of environment is someone who works well within a hierarchical structure, communicates clearly, is specific about outcomes, and delegates carefully. In brief, they need to be competent within a clearly specified role.

The developmental culture is a culture that finds meaning primarily in the creation of programs and activities furthering the personal and professional growth of all members of the collegiate community. It values research and planning. It conceives of the mission of the institution as the encouragement of potential for cognitive, affective, and behavioral maturation among all students, faculty, administrators and staff. It holds untested assumptions about the inherent desire of all its members to achieve personal growth and development.

The developmental culture emerged in response to the collegial culture, which for all its open communication, "suffers from a lack of organization and coherence" (Bergquist, 1992, p. 93). Bergquist traces the origin of this culture back to the 1970s and 80s when, as a result of the student movement in the late 1960s, educators began to question whether higher education was meeting students' needs, or for that matter, faculty's needs as learners. When the growth in higher education began to dramatically slow in the 1970s, faculty began to recognize the need to retrain as programs were reduced or cut. As a result of both the positive impetus to meet learners' needs and the more negative concern of job security, higher education saw a surge of

faculty development programs. It was estimated that by the mid-1970s faculty development was offered by fully one-half of the institutions of higher education in the United States (Bergquist, 1992, p. 97).

In a developmental culture, the institutional values are (1) teaching and learning, (2) personal and organizational dynamics, and (3) institutional mission, which are values also held by the managerial culture. Leadership in a developmental culture tends to be complex and nontraditional and is manifested indirectly. Leaders in developmental cultures are characterized as "charismatic," "collaborative," and as "servant-leaders." On a less positive note, they can be characterized as idealistic and ineffective. Bergquist notes that in recent years, more developmental leaders have assumed positions of leadership in American colleges and universities and it remains to be seen what long-term effects they may have on their institutions.

The negotiating culture is a culture that finds meaning primarily in the establishment of equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures for the distribution of resources and benefits to the institution. This culture values confrontation and bargaining and conceives of the mission as either the undesirable promotion of existing social attitudes and structure or the establishment of new and more liberating ones. It holds untested assumptions about the ultimate role of power and the frequent need for outside mediation in a viable collegiate institution (Bergquist, 1992, pp. 5-6).

The negotiating culture emerged in response to the managerial culture. Like the developmental culture, the negotiating culture has its roots in the 1970s when faculty unionization and collective bargaining grew stronger as growth and resources dwindled. Faculty in this culture believe that change occurs through confrontation and the effective (i.e., strategic) use of resources. Like the managerial culture, the negotiating culture found a fertile

environment in the community colleges which were still considered more strongly linked to the highly unionized secondary system than to four-year colleges and universities, for whom collective bargaining was not as attractive to the predominant collegial culture.

The key values in the negotiating culture are equality and egalitarianism. The presence of collective bargaining has implications for leadership. Ironically, the negotiating culture needs a strong managerial culture in order to exist. Otherwise, there is no adversarial relationship and no need for negotiation. Thus, the negotiating culture tends to attract the same kind of leadership as the managerial culture, whether the leaders come from the faculty or some other constituency. Again, this culture tends to reduce the power of leadership and management at the same time that it reinforces their authority and centralizes their power. Mid-level management becomes especially important in a mediator role although it is not a comfortable place to be depending upon whether chairs are considered management or faculty, for example. Given that unions have very limited positions within their hierarchy, faculty who wish to assume leadership roles generally must do so in the hierarchy of the college or university, where it is much less acceptable to actively seek a management position. In the negotiating and developmental cultures, as well as in the collegial culture, it is both unseemly and suspect for a faculty member to willingly move into management.

In fact, there is great reluctance on the part of academics to recognize management as "anything more than a necessary evil" (Atwell, 1981, p. 12). This attitude is compounded by the absence of a bottom line such as exists within the corporate world and against which progress can be more easily measured. Given the strong belief that the only viable administrators are those which emerge from the faculty ranks, the net result is that many managers are inexperienced and untrained and have little opportunity for learning other than on the job. There

is even considerable disdain for those who hold doctorates in education rather than a "true" academic discipline. "In this value system, administration is not worthy of study; it is simply done. . . .The unwilling administrator, the administrator who manages by sheer intellect and instinct, the notion of born leader – all these are alive and well in academe"(Atwell, 1981, p. 13).

LEADERSHIP ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Given academe's ambivalence, if not antipathy, for administration, how then does one account for the clarion call for stronger leadership in higher education? It is important to recognize that academics make a clear distinction between managers and leaders, even though both often require the skills of the other (Gardner, 1990). The key contribution of the leader is to create an organizational vision and goals. The key contribution of the manager is to implement the vision through competent allocation of resources (Argyris, 1980, p. 63). But as Rowley notes, "the hard reality is that the campus will want a vision from its president or chancellor, will call for it and will criticize that individual for lack of leadership if no vision emerges. And just as bad, even if one does emerge, it will be criticized unless it is an inclusive Christmas tree with an ornament on it for everyone"(Rowley, 1997, p. 271).

It is also important to understand that the call for leadership is probably more the result of external forces than internal ones. Whereas the 1960s and 1970s had been concerned with access of underrepresented constituencies in academe, the 1980s could be characterized by concerns over quality, a characteristic response of academe to periods of "loosened" standards and increased diversity (Stark & Lattuca, 1997). Another reason cited for the deterioration of the quality of the curriculum was the lack of leadership in education (Toombs, 1991). It is because of the power of external influences over higher education that the 1990s have been called "the

time of troubles" (Kerr, 1994). As Stark (1997) observed, it is society, not higher education itself who is the primary initiator of change. For the first time, higher education is mostly the reactive defender of the status quo rather than the joint initiator or at least a cooperative partner. Kerr (1994) explains that society is the aggressor for several reasons: (1) society has fewer new resources to spread around; (2) society has more claimants on those resources; (3) American society demands that higher education, as never before, concentrate on support of the economy, engaged as it is in intensified international economic competitions. "The number one priority is now clearly being given to advancing human capability, with educational justice in second place, with lesser places (if any at all) to developmental growth, pure learning, or an evaluation (criticism) of society" (Kerr, 1994). Society in the 90s is demanding of higher education a reordering of priorities and a more efficient use of resources. Simply, society looks to the academic leadership, elected or appointed, at federal, state and local levels, to take action. In turn, academics look for the leader who can respond to external demands for accountability and still preserve the primarily collegial culture of their institutions.

This is not to suggest that higher education is not interested in improving student success by changing the nature and delivery of instructional methods, content, and student support services. California community colleges are in the midst of what could be a fundamental shift in focus from teaching to learning (Barr, 1995). As part of this focus, colleges are examining their infrastructure and rethinking traditional forms of organization in favor of learning communities or organizations (O'Banion, 1997). To make this shift requires transformational leadership, but leadership that understands the culture of higher education, in general, and the culture of their own institutions, in particular.

Terry O'Banion, CEO of the League for Innovation in the Community College, is unequivocal about the need for change and change agents. Citing the reform movement of the past decade as a failure, O'Banion likens its effects to nothing more than "trimming the branches of a dying tree" (O'Banion, 1997, p. 7). He is also unequivocal about the fact that there is considerable resistance to change. Community colleges are under increasing pressure to respond quickly to changes that can have significant impact on their mission if not their survival. A survey of articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* conveys the enormity of some of these changes: "Arizona Considers Landmark Plan to Allow Community Colleges to Offer Baccalaureate Degrees (January 16, 1998), "Colorado Community Colleges Plan Degree to Be Offered Entirely Over the Internet (November 28, 1997), "For-Profit Higher Education Sees Booming Enrollments and Revenues (January 23, 1998), "Higher-Education Systems as Cartels: The End is Near," (October 1, 1997), "Rethinking the Role of the Professor in an Age of High-Tech Tools," (October 3, 1997).

The issues for community colleges are varied and complex. They include access, governance, funding, accountability, curriculum, and technology (Robles, 1998). By themselves, they pose significant challenges to the knowledge, skills, and expertise of leaders at all levels of the institution. In addition, leaders who attempt to effect significant change must be prepared for the challenges posed by various constituencies within the academic culture and its immediate environment.

> Resistance to change is a hallmark of higher education. It has been said that changing a college is a lot like moving a cemetery -- you don't get a lot of help from the residents. In this case, the residents include the educational bureaucrats, the faculty, the administrators, the students, and the parents – all stakeholders in the *status quo*. (O'Banion, 1997, p. 28)

California has one of the most extensive and complex educational bureaucracies in the nation. Its decentralized system of public education coupled with its legislative tendency to overmanage K-14 instruction creates barriers to change that are often well beyond the impact, much less control, of principals and presidents. O'Banion suggests that either the bureaucrats who maintain the bureaucracies have to be enlisted in the reform effort or they have to be bypassed.

Faculty comprise another group with which leaders must deal effectively. O'Banion notes that faculty can be highly resistant to change because they were "first 'schooled' as students then inducted into a system in which they become the gatekeepers of educational tradition," even though they may themselves be deeply cynical about the system (O'Banion, 1997. P. 29). Faculty attitudes are further complicated by the presence of collective bargaining. Using Bergquist's model, at least two opposing cultures, the managerial and the negotiating, are responsible for faculty ambivalence.

Another constituency with which leaders must deal is students and their parents. Ironically, this group may be the most resistant to change (O'Banion, 1997, p. 33). Parents adhere to out-of-date ideas about what constitutes a "good" education. Students have been trained to be passive learners and resist efforts to get them to assume more responsibility for their own learning.

Finally, there are the "other" campus leaders – administrators – who are usually ill prepared to be change agents and risk-takers. Department and division chairs probably are most cognizant of those areas that need transformation but find themselves in a role that is neither fish nor fowl and therefore, their effectiveness can be limited. Even many presidents are poorly prepared to effect substantive change. Many were hired more for managerial skills than

leadership ability or are expected to focus on external relations and leave internal governance and planning to faculty and management.

Management and leadership in higher education have been likened to herding cats. Prevailing definitions and theories of leadership, mostly corporate in origin, are useful only if consideration is given to the unique environment of higher education. If Bergquist's model and theories are accurate, there are at least four distinct yet interrelated cultures. One may be dominant, but all four are in play at any given time. How they interact and their effect on the institution's ability to adapt are unique to each institution. Thus, a leader in the academic realm must be extremely skilled in a variety of leadership strategies in order to meet the needs of so many different constituencies. Bergquist and Phillips (1977) observe that leaders of colleges and universities have more in common with mayors of communities or small cities than they do with leaders of corporations. It may be, as they suggest, that academic leaders would benefit more from community development strategies than they would from organizational strategies adopted from corporate organizations and grafted onto colleges and universities (Bergquist, 1992, p. 218).

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